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Exploring Film Seriality: An Introduction

Frank Krutnik and Kathleen Loock

Film started out as an inherently serial medium, consisting (at least in the analogue era) of a sequence of still photographic images recorded or arranged on a transparent plastic strip that, when played back at a certain speed, presented the illusion of flowing, living motion. Film's technical basis also facilitated its commercial potency, via a serial reproducibility that allowed multiple prints to be struck from negatives which could then circulate across cultures and through time. In Walter Benjamin's influential formulation, film was the exemplary cultural form of the age of mechanical reproduction, its ostensive seriality challenging the auratic singularity valued in traditional works of art.¹ Individual films have reached audiences through successive media articulations – for example, 35mm and 16mm film, television transmission, VHS, laserdisc, DVD and Blu-ray, internet streaming – as they enjoy a malleable serial existence that sees them endlessly reformulated and reformatted to capitalize on transformations in consumption technology, film culture and cinephilia, as well as modalities of taste and interpretation.² A more familiar perception of cinematic seriality involves its mobilization of a repertoire of serial storytelling techniques it shares with other popular media – such as the use of recurrent characters, ongoing storylines and delayed narrative closure. As a popular medium, moreover, cinema exhibits the dialectical tension between repetition and variation that Umberto Eco sees as central to seriality, and which drives commercial story production more generally.³

Along with newspapers, radio and television, cinema has since its early days proved a key site for the production and dissemination of serial fictions. In the United

States, for example, film serials or chapter-plays (multi-part narratives with short episodes shown in monthly or weekly intervals) were a defining feature of silent cinema. They survived the transition to sound and continued to exist well into the studio era, side by side with Hollywood feature films, until they moved to television. Even after the feature film was established as cinema's main event, Hollywood continued to hold on to more or less explicitly serialized forms like the film series, the remake, the sequel, the prequel, and so on. Such forms all exhibit serial structures as they repeat familiar formulas with a difference, and continue or expand narratives in previously established storyworlds.

Despite their prominent, and ongoing, significance within cinematic production and reception, serial narratives have been curiously neglected within film scholarship. This special issue of *Film Studies* examines diverse forms, processes and contexts of film seriality from the 1910s to the contemporary period, outlining various approaches to a topic that is integral to cinema and other popular media. Taking inspiration from the interdisciplinary initiative of seriality studies, the articles presented here explore cinema's medium-specific serial forms and the manner in which its serial enterprises have been shaped by developments elsewhere in popular culture. Before engaging with specific forms of film seriality, however, we will briefly situate them within a broader history of popular media seriality.

Seriality and Popular Media

Serial storytelling has a lengthy history, dating back to traditions of oral narrative, but we are most interested here in its significance as a modern, predominantly commercial mode of narration that is geared towards mass audiences, and which depends on industrial reproducibility and the affordances of technological media. The

serial forms that emerged in nineteenth-century popular culture make ‘excellent economic sense’⁴ in the capitalist market societies of the Western hemisphere. Producers of serial content sell an entertainment commodity that essentially promotes both itself and the medium in which it appears, while its narrative structures prompt the repeated, regular consumption of installments over extended periods of time. As a market-oriented production and distribution mechanism that is based on an industrial division of labor and highly standardized narrative schemas, popular seriality offers virtually endless possibilities for variation and continuation.⁵

Serialized literary genres like the Victorian novel, French *feuilleton* and American magazine fiction achieved immense popularity in the first half of the nineteenth century, as new printing techniques enabled their mass circulation in the literary marketplace.⁶ They were affordable and reached an increasingly literate audience that considered reading fiction a pleasurable leisure activity. First appearing in French newspapers, serialized novels soon established themselves as a significant commercial and cultural force. For example, Eugène Sue’s *Les mystères de Paris* (*The Mysteries of Paris*), published in daily installments on the front page of the *Journal des débats* between 1842 and 1843, dramatically increased the subscription base of the Parisian newspaper, kindled political debates, and quickly became a widely adopted model for successful serial storytelling.⁷ The novel’s mass appeal had as much to do with its sensational content – sex, crime, violence – as with Sue’s serial storytelling techniques.⁸ Featuring a large variety of characters and locations, *Les mystères de Paris* used a multiperspectival narration that jumped back and forth between different sub-plots and points of view. Readers thus got to know a dozen characters at a time and followed lines of action that evolved almost simultaneously, and which were skillfully designed to weave together

sensationalist themes, melodramatic plotting and delay tactics.⁹ Sue and his editors also relied on a production model that closely linked the fast-paced, daily publication of individual episodes to their reception, which allowed *Les mystères de Paris* to respond to current events as well as to input from their readers.

Throughout the nineteenth century, socio-critical, sentimental and melodramatic narratives by writers like Sue, Charles Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe were published and read in installments, before they were eventually collated in bound book form. Disseminated across many months, or even years, these serial publications could incorporate their readership into the narrative flow and encourage collective interactions with them. This participatory dynamic suggested that readers could have an impact on the development and outcome of the stories, and that these serial narratives played a key role in their everyday lives. In modern, heterogeneous societies, where people with different ethnic, religious, regional and social backgrounds lived together without necessarily knowing one another, the repeated (and often ritualistic) consumption of mass-produced serial narratives thus helped construct and maintain conceptions of the nation and nationality. They actively shaped social and political life, as well as cultural values, rather than merely representing them.¹⁰

The remarkable success of *Les mystères de Paris* further demonstrated the valuable role serial narratives could play in attracting, engaging, and regularizing a mass readership for newspapers. This serial mode of production achieved such success in Europe and the United States that it was soon adapted to new print media forms and eventually provided a template for cinema, radio and television. Melodramatic and sensational serial narratives published in dime novels, penny dreadfuls and story papers proved especially popular from the 1860s onwards, with

the technological innovations and well-developed infrastructure of media modernity ensuring the mass production and distribution of serialized content. With new printing processes in the late nineteenth century making it possible for newspapers and magazines to carry coloured illustrations, comic strips began to conquer the United States – with competing publishers depicting the adventures of recurring characters in their Sunday supplements. Appearing in daily or weekly rhythms, popular comics like Richard F. Outcault's *The Yellow Kid*, Rudolph Dirck's *Katzenjammer Kids*, Frederick Burr Opper's *Happy Hooligan* or Bud Fisher's *Mutt and Jeff* negotiated the manifold cultural, social and political transformations of modernity, as their protagonists faced the complex challenges of modern life in the multiethnic American metropolis.¹¹

From 1910 onwards, the film serial evolved in competition and convergence with the newspaper comic, as well as with other media, and remained one of the most popular serial forms in American and European cinema until the 1940s. Often adapting its properties from popular fiction, comic books or radio programs, cinema firmly anchored its serials in the mass-cultural media ecology. The printing sector in particular was closely interwoven with the film business, as magazine editorials, contests, and episode tie-ins accompanied the weekly or monthly screenings of silent film serials. These promotional paratexts extended the audiences' serial pleasures beyond the immediate cinematic experience, generating interest in the next episode and advertising the serial and the cinema as well as the magazine in which they were printed. One of the first American silent film serials, *What Happened to Mary?* (Edison, 1912), had a total of twelve one-reel episodes that were released in a monthly rhythm, entirely in step with the tie-in stories printed in *McClure's Ladies' World*. In addition, the (overwhelmingly female) readership could participate

in contests by answering the question ‘What happened to Mary?’ for each new episode.¹²

Through the 1930s and 1940s American film serials targeted children and teenagers with outrageous adventure stories that derived their suspense from nerve-racking plot twists and cliffhangers.¹³ The 1930s proved a golden age not only for the sound film serial but also for comics and radio serials – to the extent that media competition led to numerous transmedia adaptations of, for example, *Flash Gordon*, *Dick Tracy* or *The Lone Ranger*. Such proliferation allows popular serial characters to multiply ‘beyond the bounds of their original media and core texts’.¹⁴ The sprawling of serial characters across different media channels ensures their existence in the popular imagination, and can help sustain the longevity of ongoing serial narratives. American soap operas are a case in point: from the 1930s, they were broadcast on radio as daytime serials that addressed a predominantly female audience (soon followed by radio serials for children and the entire family). Their stories often focused on women who had to cope with financial hardship during the Great Depression, and the programs featured advertising for household products, cosmetics and detergents (hence the name ‘soap opera’). The longest-running daytime serial drama, *The Guiding Light*, made its radio debut in 1937 and migrated to television fifteen years later, where it ran continuously until poor ratings forced its cancellation in 2009. When television replaced radio as the most important entertainment medium after World War II, the soap opera was able to survive the media change.¹⁵ Robert C. Allen ascribes the soap opera’s unusual longevity both to its continuing success as an advertising medium and to the way its narrative structures and openness enabled it to respond to – and actively shape – social transformations.¹⁶

In the late 1970s the continuing serial format of the daytime soap was successfully adapted by US 'prime time soaps' like *Dallas* (CBS, 1978–91), *Dynasty* (ABC, 1981–89) and *Falcon Crest* (CBS, 1981–90), which Jason Mittell regards as laying the groundwork for today's narratively complex television series.¹⁷ In the new millennium, the small screen has hosted legions of dysfunctional and dramatically intriguing protagonists who are exhibited in long-form serial narratives that can run for several seasons, allowing for more nuance, variation and shading in characterization and story development. Complex models of serial narrative exploring adult themes have also attained exportable and often remake-able popularity elsewhere – for example, in Scandinavia, with series like *Forbrydelsen* (2007–12), *Borgen* (2010–13), *Bron* (2011–), and *Okkupert* (2015–); in Great Britain, with *Broadchurch* (2013–), *The Fall* (2013–16) and *The Missing* (2014–16); in France, with *Engrenages* (2005–), *Les revenants* (2012–15) and *Les témoins* (2015–).¹⁸

The rise of so-called 'quality TV'¹⁹ in the late 1990s and early 2000s prompted newspapers and magazines to lavish praise on a succession of agenda-setting shows, while scholars from various disciplines have been quick to analyze the aesthetics, narrative complexity, and cultural work of programs such as *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999–2007), *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–13) and *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007–15). Academic articles and chapters often read a show like *The Wire* (HBO, 2002–08) as a modern-day equivalent of the Victorian novel, or compare such remodeled television entertainment to classic films, operas, and even sonnets.²⁰ Apart from changing perceptions of the value of television drama, the ambitious storytelling strategies of contemporary 'quality TV' or 'complex TV' have engendered unprecedented cultural recognition of the intricacy and diversity of the medium's

deployment of serial narrative strategies. Moreover, they have sparked substantial interest in the processes and significance of serial storytelling across popular media and, more generally, in seriality as an integral feature of cultural production (for instance, in comics, digital games, and pornography).²¹

Seriality Studies

Literary studies, media studies, and cultural studies have engaged with various serial forms for some time, offering key insights into the history, modes and functions of particular media.²² Seriality studies, however, has recently emerged as a distinct form of scholarly enquiry that aims to provide in-depth and coordinated theorizations of how seriality operates within and across popular media. Foregrounding the technological and institutional affordances of the evolving media landscape, it examines the central features of serial storytelling across different media channels and historical periods.²³ As Rob Allen and Thijs van den Berg observe, ‘serialization has been so pivotal in the development of fiction, film, television and video games that we cannot fully understand the development of these forms as popular media without first tracing the influence of serialization’.²⁴ In its approach to popular media, seriality studies distinguishes the *work-bound aesthetic* of complete, self-contained texts such as novels or films from the *serial aesthetic* of open-ended narratives that develop their storylines and build fictional storyworlds over longer periods of time, in constant feedback with their reception.²⁵ But it is equally interested in understanding the enduring appeal of serial storytelling, its narrative forms and its cultural and social functions.

Seriality studies has played a key role in highlighting the importance of seriality to past and present media production, generating much exciting and

revelatory scholarship in the process,²⁶ but cinema remains comparatively neglected within the field. In part, this can be explained by the relatively low cultural status accorded cinematic seriality. While serial storytelling is currently thriving on both big and small screens, it is the narratively complex television shows that thrill audiences and critics alike, as well as attracting established movie directors, producers, writers, and actors, and inspiring extensive scholarly research. Contemporary cinema's serial narratives, by contrast, often produce the reverse effect. Popular critics routinely invoke the series and sequels emanating from Hollywood as evidence of the industry's greed and waning creativity. And while scholars have devoted substantial attention to such films as *The Godfather Part II* (Coppola, 1974) or the early *Alien* (1979, 1986) and *Terminator* movies (1984, 1991), they tend to focus on their significance within a director's oeuvre, or on cinematic, aesthetic, generic, and thematic aspects rather than on their role as part of serial assemblages.²⁷ Contemporary television has achieved cultural respectability by differentiating serialized drama from the episodic series format associated with mass-appeal network programming, but a film's distinctiveness most often derives from claiming it as a singular art work that transcends its commercially-driven serial identity.

Only in recent years have scholars made concerted efforts to explore film seriality. Several monographs and critical anthologies examine serials, series, sequels or remakes within wider contexts of industrial and cultural production, as well as probing their formal regimes of repetition and variation.²⁸ A recent essay collection by Amanda Ann Klein and R. Barton Palmer takes a more comprehensive approach, proposing the term 'multiplicities' to describe film and television's 'dedication to continuing forms of textual creation and renewal'.²⁹ Challenging traditional conceptions of individual media texts as self-contained singularities, the

concept of 'multiplicities' instead foregrounds textual pluralities. Klein and Palmer argue that such processes are especially prominent in cinema and television, where 'the reuse, reconfiguration, and extension of existing materials, themes, images, formal conventions or motifs, and even ensembles of performers constitute irresistible adjuncts to continuing textual production, supporting the economies of scale upon which the film, and later the television, industries very quickly began to rely'.³⁰ Bearing in mind Klein and Palmer's broad definition, it is surprising that critics have been so resistant to investigating the serial dynamics integral to cinematic production and reception. After all, some of the canonical analytic frameworks within film scholarship – such as authorship, genre and stardom – foreground the interplay of repetition and variation across runs of films, yet are rarely thought of in terms of seriality.

Studying Film Seriality

Besides general parameters of serial production, cinematic storytelling has always relied, like television, on explicitly serial forms that aim to repeat episodic structures (as in the series mode) or to extend an ongoing story across multiple installments (as in the serial proper). But compared to the relatively fast-paced serial narratives disseminated by newspapers, radio and television on a daily or weekly schedule, the elaborate mechanisms for feature film production and distribution result in a much slower, less continuous serial rhythm.³¹ With even the most avid moviegoers attending the cinema on a comparatively infrequent basis, producers had to adopt more medium-specific serialization strategies that were not reliant on such immediate interaction.

When it emerged as a popular form in US cinema in the 1910s, the film serial played a key role in 'establishing and then developing a substantial consuming film-going public'.³² Short, weekly installments of early serials like *The Perils of Pauline* (1913) or *The Exploits of Elaine* (1914) delivered self-contained episodes that built a continuing narrative across several months. By the mid-1910s, the film serial demonstrated that extended narratives were able to prompt 'regular and systematic audience attendance'.³³ Devices such as the cliffhanger (an unresolved crisis point, twist, or sudden revelation at the end of an episode that propels the audience to seek out the next installment) and the recap (which reorients the audience in relation to preceding characters and actions) helped develop a strong sense of continuity across successive episodes. They formed part of a repertoire of serial storytelling techniques that aimed to prolong the narrative and intensify the audience's emotional investment in it. Scott Higgins suggests that such 'narrative architecture' also enhanced the ludic quality of the film serial, by encouraging the audience to play along with a self-consciously manipulative narration.³⁴ Cliffhangers, for instance, frequently 'cheat' by offering the audience a misleadingly partial view of a situation of jeopardy, which turns out to be resolved easily in the subsequent episode. They thereby 'direct viewers to notice the act of storytelling by openly withholding and revealing important exposition. Without subtlety or cleverness, the narration simply announces previously unseen major events'.³⁵

Where the serial narration of chapter-plays builds an ongoing narrative across multiple installments, the film series develops new adventures around recurring characters within explicitly self-contained episodic structures that exhibit less narrative continuity from one film to the next. Individual episodes may be very similar, but each instance establishes and resolves a specific narrative intrigue,

although – as Jason Mittell remarks of episodic television – they share ‘a serialized storyworld and characters ... [as] an ongoing, consistent narrative element’.³⁶ In a useful formulation of the series model, Ed Wiltse notes of *Strand Magazine*’s Sherlock Holmes tales that ‘[w]hile complete in itself, each story contains, like the genetic code in a cell, the formula for the complete series’.³⁷ A key component of B-film production, which flourished with the major studios’ block booking practice and the rise of the double bill, the film series was the most prevalent serial form in the Hollywood studio system through the 1930s and 1940s.³⁸ In particular, film series guaranteed that Hollywood’s vertically integrated studio system worked efficiently in turning out movies that fed ‘the maw of exhibition’.³⁹ They supplied audiences with new product on a regular basis, with their thematic and generic variety appealing to a wide moviegoing public and their frequent release patterns and serial structures fostering long-term loyalty among viewers. Most often, film series centered on serial characters like Charlie Chan, Tarzan, and Sherlock Holmes that were adapted from other media, and ‘arrive[d] on screen fully developed and remain[ed] largely unchanged from one film to the next’.⁴⁰

The study of cinematic seriality needs to acknowledge the degree to which the serial and the series are broad tendencies that can be subject to extensive formal variation and combination. They are constantly evolving industrial, textual, and discursive categories that operate in different ways within different periods and cinematic cultures. This also applies to cinema’s broader array of serial formats, which comprises, among others, the sequel, the remake, and the prequel. Films in these categories are driven by a serial dynamic of repetition and innovation, even though their frequency of production may vary considerably, as may their degree of narrative continuity, closure, and cohesion. If the sequel (like the serial or series) is

predominantly continuity-oriented, the remake foregrounds repetition while nonetheless exhibiting a serial dialogue with earlier versions, and the prequel complicates the chronological order of an existing serial narrative. Set before the events of an earlier film with the same characters (usually played by different actors), the prequel lends itself to the rebooting of expensive, creatively depleted, or dormant franchises and series.⁴¹ A term for restarting a computer, 'reboot' was first applied to superhero comics that break with the continuity of an ongoing series in order to start over with radically re-designed characters and storylines. Since the critical and commercial success of *Batman Begins* (Nolan, 2005) and *Casino Royale* (Campbell, 2006) – which gave new impetus to the Batman film franchise and the James Bond series by reinventing their heroes – the term has entered the Hollywood lexicon as a label that first and foremost serves promotional purposes, 'vouch[ing] for ... creativity ... [and] promis[ing] to purge older stories of whatever might have become problematic in them'.⁴²

The investigation of film seriality has the potential to initiate a similarly productive rebooting of the study of popular cinema, by focussing attention on how procedures for 'telling a familiar story as a new story'⁴³ are crucial factors in cinematic production and reception within and across cultural, historical, and industrial contexts. The serial practices of popular cinema are all too easily condemned as the exploitative and aesthetically compromised mechanisms of a mercenary culture industry. But to ignore seriality is to do great damage to our understanding of how popular cinema, and popular culture more broadly, operates. It is especially important to recognize the degree to which much of the pleasure of popular films derives precisely from the way they mobilize stories and attractions that are 'the same again, but different'. Such variegated repetition is especially

convenient for cinema industries, allowing as it does for systems of standardization and difference that are essential to manufacturing, distribution and promotion, but it is also fundamental to the enjoyment of screen storytelling. It is tempting to prioritize uniqueness, surprise and uncertainty as integral to narrative pleasure but, as Barbara Klinger observes, repetition 'is a cornerstone of the consumer's experience of entertainment that has the potential to be as enjoyable as it is inescapable'.⁴⁴ In her discussion of the serial spectatorship activity involved in the rewatching of films, Klinger suggests that such repetition allows viewers to uncover 'something new in each encounter' and thereby transform 'any film into a multilayered, inexhaustibly interesting entity, meaning that no text is immune from the process of discovery that lies at the heart of aesthetic enterprise'.⁴⁵ Arguably, the same kind of work goes into the experience of engaging with serial films of all kinds, as viewers can derive great pleasure and meaningfulness from the process of entering, once more, into the play of repetition and variation.

About this Special Issue

Building on existing scholarship, the case studies in this special issue of *Film Studies* explore serial forms, processes and contexts within cinema, as well as some key intertextual and transmedial connections. The contributors scrutinize the industrial and cultural logics of serial production, as well as the narrative and signifying operations of cinema's serial forms. Besides dealing with a wide array of popular films, from the early 1900s to the present, they take contrasting approaches to the analysis of cinematic seriality while sharing a belief in the importance of investigating the historical determination of serial media.

The articles by Ruth Mayer and Rob King concentrate on the short-film series, an often neglected form that persisted in US cinema until the 1950s as a regular feature of cinematic entertainment. Exploring films inspired by Windsor McCay's proto-surrealist newspaper comic strip *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*, Mayer examines how medial interrelations between the short formats of mass entertainment follow what she calls the 'operative logic of mass-cultural seriality'. The *Rarebit* narrative underwent processes of media change and remediation (from comic to short film to animated short), presenting increasingly bizarre serial variations on the same theme. Mayer considers the different renderings of McCay's food-induced nightmare scenarios as attempts to map and manage mass-cultural formations in the early-twentieth century United States, arguing that these short forms offer provocative insights into the larger cultural framework of media modernity. King looks at another film series that similarly aimed to translate to the screen a comic mode nurtured in print media – in this case, the adaptation and transmutation of Robert Benchley's wry Algonquin humour, disseminated by *The New Yorker* and other upscale magazines, into a series of 'average man' comedies that achieved great popularity through the 1930s and early 1940s. King argues that the shift in Benchley's comic style and comic persona were motivated by his accommodation both to the shifting media landscape and to the 'populist seriality' that emerged as a key feature of the New Deal cultural climate. Mayer and King both explore how the serial logic of the texts they examine was shaped as much by broader cultural transformations as they were by processes of media change.

The articles by Frank Krutnik and Scott Higgins examine contrasting examples of the feature film series, both of which were based on serial properties in other media. Krutnik explores the serial dynamics of the *Whistler* films released by

Columbia Pictures from 1944 to 1948. One of the most unusual B-series produced during the Hollywood studio era, the *Whistler* movies aimed to replicate the distinctive features of the long-running radio series that inspired them. Investigating how these films operate within the industrial logic of 1940s B-movie production, Krutnik examines their status as transmedial adaptations and also locates them within a broader 'pulp serialscape' that includes the fiction of Cornell Woolrich and the horror films of Val Lewton. Higgins considers how one of the most high-profile and long-running international film series – the James Bond espionage adventures – adapts and extends traditions established in earlier action-oriented film serials. Based on the novels of Ian Fleming, and financed (at least initially) by the US company United Artists, this globally successful film series redeploys storytelling strategies developed in earlier chapter-plays to encourage a ludic engagement with its ongoing fictional world – a technique that has proved extremely influential for numerous action-film franchises.

Kathleen Loock and Holly Chard both explore aspects of serial production in post-studio era Hollywood. Addressing a diverse range of films and paratexts, Loock provides a nuanced understanding of film seriality by reconsidering the role sequels play within the wider culture of cinematic repetition and innovation. Focusing on the rise of the Hollywood sequel in the 1970s and 1980s, she analyzes contemporary industrial and popular discourses on the sequel, sequelization, and film seriality. As industry insiders, trade papers, and film critics tried to make sense of the burgeoning sequel trend, the ensuing discourses and cultural practices not only shaped the contexts of sequel production and reception at the time but also played into the movies' serialization strategies and their increasingly self-referential manoeuvres. Chard examines the shift in John Hughes' production strategy in the 1990s from teen

films to family films, arguing that his serial production methods reveal a shrewd understanding of commercial strategies and shifting audience demands. Addressing the films that followed the phenomenally successful *Home Alone* (1990), Chard shows that Hughes was able to capitalize on its serial potential by reworking narrative elements and gags to generate not only a distinct series but also a broader cycle of family-oriented fare that held particular appeal for young viewers, and which catered to their enjoyment of serial pleasures.

Taken together, the six contributions to this special issue suggest a range of possibilities for re-examining serial forms and procedures that are crucial to popular cinema. Although we focus mostly on US cinema, we hope these case studies will prompt consideration of a wider array of national and transnational, as well as synchronic and diachronic cine-serialities – along with further investigation of the integral relations between seriality in cinema and affiliated media. Serial forms have proved especially popular in Indian, Hong Kong, Japanese, or British cinema, for instance. Long-running detective, samurai, and horror film series are often based on novels, radio serials and television series and later regularly taken up, remade and continued in various other media.⁴⁶ Such examples suggest that the critical exploration of cinematic seriality is not only long overdue but will hopefully in itself prove a serial enterprise that will run and run.

¹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 217–52.

² See, for example, Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006, pp. 54–90.

³ Umberto Eco, 'Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Post-Modern Aesthetics', *Daedalus* 114:4 (1985): pp. 161–84.

⁴ Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera*, Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1997, p. 2.

⁵ See Roger Hagedorn, 'Doubtless to Be Continued: A Brief History of Serial Narrative', in Robert C. Allen (ed.), *To Be Continued: Soap Operas Around the World*, London/New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 27–48; Frank Kelleter, 'Populäre Serialität: Eine Einführung', in Frank Kelleter (ed.), *Populäre Serialität: Narration-Evolution-Distinktion. Zum seriellen Erzählen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012, pp. 11–46; and Frank Kelleter, 'Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality', in Frank Kelleter (ed.), *Media of Serial Narrative*, Columbus: OH: Ohio State University Press, 2017, pp. 7–34; Kathleen Loock, 'Introduction: Serial Narratives', in Kathleen Loock (ed.), *Serial Narratives*, special issue of *LWU: Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 47:1–2 (2014), p. 5.

⁶ See, among others, Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984; Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1991; and Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures*.

⁷ Hagedorn, 'Doubtless to Be Continued', p. 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁹ See Jörg Tüschmann, 'Spannung in Zeitungsliteratur: Romananfang und serielles Erzählen am Beispiel des frühen französischen Feuilletonromans', in Ingo Irsigler et al. (eds), *Zwischen Text und Leser: Studien zu Begriff, Geschichte und Funktion literarischer*

Spannung, München: text+kritik, 2008, pp. 225–46; Hans-Otto Hügel, 'Eugène Sues *Die Geheimnisse von Paris* wiedergelesen: Zur Formgeschichte seriellen Erzählens im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', in Kelleter, *Populäre Serialität*, pp. 49–73.

¹⁰ See Shane Denson and Ruth Mayer, 'Grenzgänger: Serielle Figuren im Medienwechsel', in Kelleter, *Populäre Serialität*, pp. 185–203; Kelleter, 'Populäre Serialität'; Ruth Mayer, *Serial Fu Manchu: The Chinese Supervillain and the Spread of Yellow Peril Ideology*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013; Daniel Stein, 'Serial Politics in Antebellum America: On the Cultural Work of the City Mystery Genre', in Kelleter, *Media of Serial Narrative*, pp. 53–73.

¹¹ See Jared Gardner, *Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-First-Century Storytelling*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012; Christina Meyer, 'Serial Entertainment/Serial Pleasure: The Yellow Kid', in Kelleter, *Media of Serial Narrative*, pp. 74–89.

¹² Rudmer Canjels, *Distributing Silent Film Serials: Local Practices, Changing Forms, Cultural Transformation*, New York: Routledge, 2011. On the serial queen melodrama, see Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001; for seriality-related observations on the silent film serial, see Ilka Brasch, 'Narrative, Technology, and the Operational Aesthetic in Film Serials of the 1910s', in Loock, *Serial Narratives*, pp. 11–24; and Shane Denson, 'The Logic of the Line Segment: Continuity and Discontinuity in the Serial-Queen Melodrama', in Robert Allen and Thijs van den Berg (eds), *Serialization in Popular Culture*, New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 65–79.

¹³ On the sound film serial, see Scott Higgins, *Matinee Melodrama: Playing with Formula in the Sound Serial*, Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016; and Guy Barefoot, *The Lost Jungle: Cliffhanger Action and Hollywood Serials of the 1930s and 1940s*, Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2017.

¹⁴ Kelleter, 'Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality', p. 20. See also Denson and Mayer, 'Grenzgänger', p. 195; and Mayer, *Serial Fu Manchu*.

¹⁵ Hagedorn, 'Doubtless to Be Continued', p. 37.

¹⁶ Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985, p. 127. On the soap opera, see also Allen (ed.), *To Be Continued ...*; Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, New York: Methuen, 1985; Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

¹⁷ Jason Mittell, 'Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television', *The Velvet Light Trap* 58 (2006), p. 32.

¹⁸ Several of these series are transnational co-productions: *Forbrydelsen* (Danish/German), *Bron* (Danish/Swedish), *Okkupert* (Swedish/French), *The Missing* (British/US).

¹⁹ On the concept of 'Quality TV', see Mark Jancovich and James Lyons (eds), *Quality Popular Television: Cult TV, the Industry, and Fans*, London: BFI, 2003; Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (eds), *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, London/New York: Tauris, 2007. Earlier studies include Jane Feuer et al. (eds), *MTM 'Quality Television'*, London: BFI, 1984; and Robert J. Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER*, New York: Continuum, 1996. Jason Mittell has reformulated the concept in *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*, New York: New York University Press, 2015.

²⁰ Cf. Andreas Jahn-Sudmann and Frank Kelleter, 'Die Dynamik serieller Überbietung: Amerikanische Fernsehserien und das Konzept des Quality TV', in Kelleter, *Populäre Serialität*, pp. 205–6. On comparisons with the novel, see Kelleter, *Serial Agencies*, Winchester: Zero Books, 2014, pp. 14–22.

²¹ On comics and seriality, see Daniel Stein, Christina Meyer, and Micha Edlich (eds), *American Comic Books and Graphic Novels*, special issue of *Amerikastudien/ American Studies* 56:4 (2011); Gardner, *Projections*; Daniel Stein and Jan-Noël Thon (eds), *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. On seriality and digital gaming, see Shane Denson and Andreas Jahn-Sudmann (eds), 'Digital Seriality', special issue of *Eludamos: Journal for*

Computer Game Culture, 8:1 (2014). On seriality and pornography, see Sarah Schaschek, *Pornography and Seriality: The Culture of Producing Pleasure*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013.

²² Although nineteenth-century serialized novels have enjoyed critical approval in their bound form, until the 1980s literary studies often dismissed serially published narratives. Media studies research on television series has been firmly established since the 1980s, with attention focusing primarily on the soap opera and on serial narratology. As cultural studies strove to legitimize the study of popular culture vis-à-vis a privileged high culture, seriality, too, experienced a re-evaluation: British cultural studies has read the daily consumption of pop-cultural products (including series), and related activities of integration and appropriation, as potentially subversive acts of resistance to existing power structures, while US-based cultural studies has theorized these reception practices as democratizing processes.

²³ See and Robert Blanchet et al. (eds), *Serielle Formen: Von den frühen Film-Serials zu aktuellen Quality-TV- und Online-Serien*, Marburg: Schüren, 2011; Kelleter, *Populäre Serialität*; Allen and van den Berg, *Serialization in Popular Culture*; Loock, *Serial Narratives*; and Kelleter, *Media of Serial Narrative*.

²⁴ Rob Allen and Thijs van den Berg. 'Introduction', in Allen and van den Berg, *Serialization in Popular Culture*, p. 1.

²⁵ Kelleter, 'Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality', p. 13.

²⁶ The six-year activities (2010-16) of the ground-breaking, inter-disciplinary and multi-national Popular Seriality Research Unit, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), has done much to raise the profile of seriality studies and has been responsible for an impressive and diverse array of scholarship. See http://www.popularseriality.de/en/ueber_uns/index.html.

²⁷ Stuart Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel: History & Form, 1911–2010*, London: BFI, 2014, p. 2.

²⁸ On the film serial, see Higgins, *Matinee Melodrama*; and Barefoot, *The Lost Jungle*; on the film series, see Jennifer Forrest (ed.), *The Legend Returns and Dies Harder Another Day: Essays on Film Series*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. On the film sequel, see Carolyn Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009; Carolyn Jess-Cooke and Constantine Verevis (eds), *Second Takes: Critical Approaches to the Film Sequel*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010; and Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*. On the film remake, see Andrew Horton and Stuart McDougal (eds), *Play It Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; Jennifer Forrest and Leonard R. Koss (eds), *Dead Ringers: The Remake in Theory and Practice*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001; Constantine Verevis, *Film Remakes*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006; Kathleen Loock and Constantine Verevis (eds), *Film Remakes, Adaptations, and Fan Productions: Remake/Remodel*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. A recently published special issue of *The Velvet Light Trap* (no. 79, Spring 2017) devoted to “Serials, Seriality, and Serialization” also includes several relevant articles on serial films and television programs. Fan-oriented studies include Jim Harmon, *The Great Movie Serials: Their Sound and Fury*, New York: Doubleday, 1972; James Robert Parish, *Great Movie Series*, South Brunswick & New York: A.S. Barnes, 1972; Ron Backer, *Mystery Movie Series of 1940s Hollywood*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011; Ed Hulse (ed.), *Blood ‘n’ Thunder’s Cliffhanger Classics*, Morris Plains, NJ: Murania Press, 2012.

²⁹ Amanda Ann Klein and R. Barton Palmer, ‘Introduction’, in Klein and Palmer (eds), *Cycles, Sequels, Spin-Offs, Remakes and Reboots: Multiplicities in Film and Television*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016, p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Frank Kelleter and Kathleen Loock, ‘Hollywood Remaking as Second-Order Serialization’, in Kelleter, *Media of Serial Narrative*, pp. 125–47.

³² Hagedorn, ‘Doubtless to Be Continued’, p. 34.

³³ Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, p. 14.

³⁴ Higgins, *Matinee Melodrama*, pp. 19–21, 72–97.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

³⁶ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV*, p. 22.

³⁷ Ed Wiltse, “‘So Constant an Expectation’: Sherlock Holmes and Seriality”, *Narrative* 6:2 (May 1998), p. 108.

³⁸ Brian Taves, ‘The B-Film: Hollywood’s other Half’, in Tino Balio (ed.), *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 313.

³⁹ Tino Balio, ‘Feeding the Maw of Exhibition’, in Balio (ed.), *Grand Design*, p. 73.

⁴⁰ Henderson, *The Hollywood Sequel*, p. 33.

⁴¹ *The Thing* (van Heijningen Jr., 2011), however, remained a stand-alone project, while various *X-Men* films, which explore the past of their protagonists, function as a sort of filler in-between regular installments.

⁴² J. D. Connor, ‘The Biggest Independent Pictures Ever Made: Industrial Reflexivity Today’, in Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon (eds), *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film*, Vol. IV, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 530.

⁴³ Kelleter and Loock, ‘Hollywood Remaking’, p. 125.

⁴⁴ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, p. 136.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.159.

⁴⁶ India’s series production includes thirteen films from Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay’s novels featuring the detective Byomkesh Bakshi (1967–), who is also the subject of several television series, radio series and video games. The India-West Bengal film studios have generated a series of eleven films about the adventures of private detective Feluda (1974–2014), based on the fiction of renowned Bengali director Satyajit Ray, who has similarly achieved exposure in various other media. Hong Kong cinema has developed numerous series, among them Jackie Chan’s *Police Story* films (1985–2013) and spin-offs as well as the Chen Zhen/*Fist of Fury* series (1972–2010), which has spawned remakes and several television series. Japanese cinema has produced the long-running series of *Zatoichi* samurai

films (1962–89), including several remakes and spin-offs as well as manga series such as *Lone Wolf and Cub* (1972–74) and the *Case Closed* films (1997–). Britain, too, has cultivated numerous film series, for example four films (1946–52) based on the popular Paul Temple BBC radio serial, three films (1955–67) derived from the BBC television's serial *The Quatermass Experiment* and its sequels, Hammer Films' Dracula and Frankenstein horror properties, and the *Carry On ...* comedies (1958–92).